

King County Agriculture Commission
Minutes from March 10, 2005
Kent Fire Station #75
Covington, WA

Commissioners Present: Dick Gradwohl, Nancy Hutto, Ben Kodama, Bob Tidball, Ewing Stringfellow, George Irwin, Gaylia Bullock and Roger Calhoon

Commissioners Absent: Judy Duff, Grant Davidson and Michael Blakely

Staff: Judy Herring, Steve Evans and Laurie Clinton, King County (KC) Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD) Agriculture Programs; Sylvia Kantor, Washington State University Extension (WSU) KC.

Guest Agency Staff: Julia Larson, Karen Wolf and Joan Burlingame, KC Executive's Office; Dennis Clark, KC DNRP WLRD; Mark Sollitto, KC DNRP WLRD Transfer of Development Credits (TDC) Program Manager; Joan Burlingame, Rural Liaison, KC Executive's Office; Jeanette McKague, Aide to KC Council member David Irons; Jeff McMorris, Aide to KC Council member Kathy Lambert; Josh Monaghan, King Conservation District (KCD)

Guests: Rita Bailie

Vice-Chair George Irwin called the meeting to order at 4:20pm. He informed everyone that due to a scheduling error at the Station, it was necessary to leave at 6:30pm, so the agenda would be shortened accordingly.

Commission Business

Staff Report: Laurie announced that Jason had regretfully resigned from the Commission due to time constraints. He is available as a resource and when time allows is willing to help with any special projects. Laurie also handed out a sign-up sheet for the booth at the Small Farm Expo on March 19th. Ethics forms were handed out and Commissioners filled them out so Laurie could get them turned in by the due date in April.

Agency Reports:

Washington State University Extension KC: Sylvia handed out the flyer for an upcoming conference, "The New Food Entrepreneur, Value-Added Processing for Farm Profitability and Sustainable Food Systems" presented by the WSU Small Farms Team on April 1 & 2 in Auburn. The conference will include workshops on dairy products, meat & poultry, fruits & vegetable, wine & cider, herbs, and more. She also told about three upcoming opportunities to learn more about local food and farms.

King Conservation District: Josh thanked the Commission for the Manure Spreader Program grant and said that the spreader was delivered to one of the Hmong farmers in Carnation who will be participating in the project. He also reported that upcoming district board elections would be held on March 22nd. Josh said there has been a strong increase in the interest from landowners for farm plans and they feel this is likely the result of the Critical Areas Ordinance.

WRIA 9 Watershed Draft

Dennis Clark announced that the draft plan came out today and had been five years in the making. He acknowledged the tremendous job Judy Taylor had done by serving on the Committee to represent the Ag Commission. Dennis provided information detailing the public meeting schedule and public comment process. The sheet also contained the "Draft Recommendations Agricultural Community Should Review" list. Dennis said that social, economic and political considerations would determine the practicality of the plan. He explained the differences of watersheds within the County in regards to salmon species and their habitat needs. His presentation reviewed the "4 H's in the Decline of Salmon" which are harvest, hatchery practices, hydropower dams and habitat, with the last being the one in which local people have a significant role. He also described the contribution of watershed plans to Puget Sound salmon recovery efforts. Dennis drew the Commission's attention to Chapter 6 because it explains the most valuable on the ground projects from a scientific standpoint. He described the Adaptive Management component, which allows for learning from mistakes and successes by making necessary changes to improve practices or to continue practices that are working. Dennis explained the habitat concerns such as changes in channels, reduced water quality and the challenge of trying to balance existing land uses with salmon survival needs.

Dennis said the Steering Committee would be reviewing the draft over the next several months. He stressed the importance of having an Ag Commissioner represent agriculture interests on the Committee.

Bob wondered if the efforts made in Skagit and Whatcom County had any influence on this plan. There have been significant voluntary efforts by farmers in those counties and he hoped that what they did right or wrong served as a learning tool in creation of this plan. He also wondered if any of this draft was shared at the Shared Salmon Strategy Conference. George asked how much had been spent on this plan and Dennis said it was approximately \$450,000 per

year from 2000-2005. He also asked how many fish would allow this plan to be considered a success. Dennis said that while the target is 27,000 fish; other considerations such as productivity per spawner and diversity in behavior and genetics are factored into the success ratio. George thanked Dennis and said he felt the Commission would definitely have comments on the Plan. The website for the draft is <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/Wrias/9/index.htm>.

Judy H. said the Regulatory and Land Use Committee of the Commission will be meeting on March 31 to further discuss the WRIA 9 Draft Plan and to formulate recommendations to bring back to the full Commission at the April meeting. Bob said he would consider serving on the WRIA 9 Steering Committee to represent the Ag Commission.

Public Comment

Joan Burlingame, the new Rural Liaison from the Executive's office introduced herself, explained her position - which is to provide public outreach to citizens on the Critical Areas Ordinance - and provided her contact information.

King County Rural Economic Development Strategy

Julia Larson, Project Coordinator, explained Executive Sims' program and stated that he is fully committed to it. She said this is all encompassing of goals and policies in the rural area and it is anticipated that the strategy will focus on: home occupations & home industries; equestrian industry; forestry; agriculture; and recreation. The goal of this effort is to create a report that creates action items with workable functions. Julia's presentation explained the scope of the strategy which is to provide reinforcement to numerous economic development efforts and actions already underway in the County; use necessary tools to develop an action to enhance economic growth that is in character with the area in which it is being proposed while enhancing and/or preserving the rural values and resources of the county; and provide strategic focus to retain and/or enhance exiting compatible business and industry to fortify and ensure continued economic health of the rural area. Julia said she looks forward to a continuing dialogue with the Commission so that the Commission will review proposals and make recommendations as to how realistic they are and what purpose they will serve. She will also be meeting with other stakeholders throughout the rural area, including rural cities. The Strategy is to be completed by December 31, 2005.

Discussion followed on types of educational activities that would be beneficial to the public, farmers and those interested in becoming farmers. Topics included business planning; liability insurance; certification of farm stands; importance of public's direct contact with farmers; and increased visibility of farmers with wholesalers. There was also comment made on the importance of including in the strategy the recommendation that WRLD Agriculture staff not be eliminated.

Karen Wolf reminded the Commission of recent code changes that benefit agriculture and said that they will be looking at both the APDs and the rural zone to make changes where possible. She also explained that this will be consistent with the Growth Management Act and the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Julia asked Commissioners to please call her with ideas or any information they have that would be helpful in developing the strategy. George thanked her for coming and said that the Commission looks forward to participating in this effort.

Transfer of Development Credits (TDC) Program

Mark Sollitto, Program Manager gave the Commission a review of the program. His presentation showed how the program was created and its direct similarities to the Farmland Preservation Program purchase of development rights. He described the criteria for the credits and how the receiving sites are selected then used to "buy" increased densities in urban areas. Mark explained the current status of credits in the "bank" and how they are being handled now to provide stability for the program as it grows. Mark reported on the current policy and regulation changes being reviewed by the Mayor of Seattle and the City Council, which could result in a change of receiving sites within the city. Seattle is proposing zoning changes to its downtown to increase density and building height - important goals under the Growth Management Act. The concern is that this could result in a reduction in demand for the credits if the Mayor and City Council don't support the intent of the TDC program, which is to reduce rural sprawl.

The Commission discussed writing a letter requesting that the Mayor and City Council continue their support of the TDC program in order to protect farms by requiring credits for high-rise buildings. Allowing an increase in urban density through TDC's is a direct connection to agriculture and downtown Seattle. It was decided that Laurie would work with Mark to draft a letter for the Commission to review and approve at the April meeting. George thanked Mark for bringing this to the commission's attention and coming to meet with them.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:35pm.